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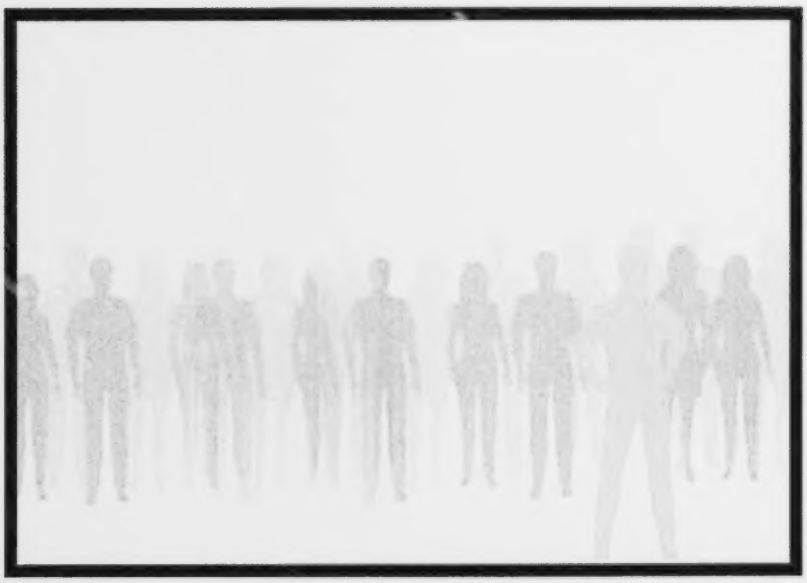
SCHOOLSCAPES

WORKING TOGETHER

By Francine Payette
(Translation)

Identity and World-View



How we react to events reveals who we are, and how we make our decisions sheds light on our view of the world around us. We invite you to take a few minutes to explore who you are by considering the following example.

Imagine you had been invited to participate, as a panelist, in an important professional convention in Toronto—just when the World Health Organization (WHO) had issued its travel advisory warning people not to visit this city. Plane ticket in hand, how would you have reacted? The threat of severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) would have placed you before an unavoidable dilemma: whether or not to go through with a trip for which you had been preparing for several weeks.

Which of the following considerations would weigh the most in your decision? Your trust in the expertise of the WHO? Reassuring declarations by public authorities in Toronto? Concerns expressed by your family and friends? The position of your boss, who told you that, upon your return, you would have to stay away from the office for 12 days and would be paid for only 3 of them? Your confidence in your immune system? Your commitment to the convention's organizing committee? Prudence in the face of the unknown?

Would you have sought more information than that offered in newspaper headlines and television news programs? What sources would you have considered the most credible and why?

By carrying out this little exercise, you can learn a little bit more about the values, beliefs, knowledge and attitudes that guide your actions and make you who you are.

Summary

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Québec

2007-03550/

A meeting of minds

By David Fuchs

This year's second and last training session for resource persons was aimed at identifying guidance strategies to help students construct their identity and world-view, and incorporate a cultural dimension into school life. Close to 600 teachers, principals, education consultants and school board officials were called on to foster student commitment at the affective, cognitive and social levels, all within the ongoing implementation of the QEP in elementary schools and its introduction at the secondary level.

The session got off to a thought-provoking start with a presentation by Diane Pacom, associate professor of sociology at the University of Ottawa, on the social fabric of the lives of today's youth (see article opposite). In the afternoon, a panel of QEP component representatives shared their thoughts on how the subject areas and broad areas of learning allow students to construct their identity and develop their world-view (see "Constructing One's Identity and World-View"). This was followed by a workshop in which participants discussed their views on the topic. During the workshop Avril Aitken gave a presentation on the importance of constructing identity within an inquiry-based learning approach (see "How People Learn").

Day two was devoted to the cultural dimension and to tools that educators can use to incorporate culture into their classrooms. The panel of component representatives presented their views on how culture can be approached through their respective subject areas. As on the previous day, a workshop allowed participants to dig deeper and to reflect on what "culture" represents for them and the challenges they perceive to properly address the issue in their schools. In the afternoon workshop, participants generated ideas on how to meet these challenges.

The session ended with a conference by Dominique Demers, a well-known Québec writer, and Patrick Beaudin, executive director of the Société pour la promotion de la science et de la technologie du Québec, who gave their testimonies and reflections on culture (see "A Living and Human Science" and "A Touch of Spling!").

A new feature at this training session was the simultaneous translation into English of all presentations, which was much appreciated by representatives of the English school community.

Finally, Robert Bisaillon, Assistant Deputy Minister for Preschool, Elementary and Secondary Education, announced that the training sessions will continue in 2003-2004, for a fourth consecutive year. These two-day sessions, organized by the Direction générale de la formation des jeunes, have proven to be effective forums to disseminate new ideas on education throughout the Québec elementary and secondary school community.

The Social Fabric of Young People's Lives Today

By Pascale Sauvé (Translation)

efore an assembly of 600 people gathered for the training session for resource persons, Diane Pacom—professor at the University of Ottawa and member of the scientific committee of the Observatoire Jeunes et Societé of the Institut national de la recherche scientifique (INRS)—shared the results of her research on the social fabric of young people's lives today.

She began by drawing attention to two large tapestries adorning the walls of the assembly room. "What would happen if we tugged at the threads of these beautiful tapestries? What would be left of these masterpieces? Only the memory of the tapestries, the canvas onto which they had been woven, and a few bits and pieces of the work. That is the legacy we have left to our youth: an unravelled tapestry. Today, the social fabric of young people's lives is an unravelled cloth, a world that is missing essential elements," said Pacom. "It is a world that has to be rebuilt."

An inherited world

Who has left them this legacy? The previous generations? A world that, in the last few years, has undergone considerable transformation?

Pacom pointed out that the history of youth is quite recent. "The *youth* category, as a distinct segment of the population with its own characteristics, is a recent phenomenon." In the past, a person simply went from being a child to being an adult. It was only in the 1960s and 1970s that a new social and historical category emerged: young people. It began with the baby boom that followed the Second World War.

The generation now known as the baby boomers thus helped create the youth category by establishing its characteristics. This was the first thread to be pulled from the tapestry. "Baby boomers overturned prewar values and traditions, which up until then had been passed down from generation to generation like the Olympic flame," she explained. "In one blow, they extinguished forever the flame of wisdom, wealth, spirituality and values that their parents had given them."

In essence, baby boomers challenged society's three basic relationships: the man-woman relationship, the child-adult relationship, and the nature-culture relationship. They initiated a veritable revolution.

The man-woman relationship

Undeniably, the relationship between men and women has changed enormously. Women have entered the education system in massive numbers and rapidly gained power in civil society. "Should we celebrate this? Of course," said Pacom. "But it has had a very deconstructive impact on life." Women's assertion of their rights has affected the family, for example. While once a single family model existed, today there are multiple kinds of families. "We cannot return to the traditional family model, and it would not be desirable, either," the sociologist stressed. "But teachers now face classes of children that come from all kinds of families. Historically, this is a first." How do we deal with this fact?

The child-adult relationship

The child-adult relationship has also changed: baby boomers challenged the notion of adult authority. "The formal authority of past times no longer exists, because we contested it ourselves," stated Pacom. "We should be happy because we have a generation of young people who are autonomous. But is it easy to live with? No." She believes that this is compounded by the fact that baby boomers have not come to terms with what it means to be an adult, that is, to take control and be in power. "We have abdicated this responsibility," she said. Consequently, young people no longer have any points of reference. What should be done?

The nature-culture relationship

Baby boomers also challenged the relationship between human beings and nature. "We were the first generation to draw attention to the fact that humankind was destroying nature. The result? A generation that, for the first time in history, does not know where it stands—a generation whose primary reference point is fear. And we can't reassure these young people, because there's a worm in the apple and we're the ones who put it there." What should we do?

According to Pacom, one thing is certain: we have to find answers for these young people. "We have deconstructed the world and congratulated ourselves for it. We have been the heroes of a wealthy and creative generation that has lived out its dreams to the fullest. But we have also been a narcissistic generation," she admitted. "We have spent too much time looking at ourselves in the mirror, so we do not see the suffering of our young people, we do not see the void." And yet, if the baby-boomer generation created this unravelled tapestry, then it must take responsibility for its actions.

In saying this, Pacom is not advocating a return to the past. On the contrary, she suggests taking the time to get to know today's youth. "What are the characteristics of today's young people? They live in the ephemeral, in doubt. They live in this unravelled tapestry," said the speaker. "Our young people make up a sublime and tragic generation, with uncertain borders. First and foremost, it is a generation in need of mentors, a generation that needs a new kind of guidance."

What Pacom is asking is that people take the time to listen to young people, to understand them, to validate their existence and to build bridges between the generations. "We cannot do anything without them, they are our partners. So let's make an effort to get to know them."

Stereotypes

Society tends to have a negative image of young people, says Diane Pacom. She groups these attitudes into three major stereotypes.

The first stereotype, or popular myth, is that young people are violent. "Since the killings that occurred in a few schools in the United States, many people have adopted a discourse that locks young people into this negative box," said the sociologist. Yet according to statistics, violence among young people has in fact declined in the last ten years, both in Canada and the United States. "Extraordinary disciplinary mechanisms have been set up based on a completely erroneous conclusion," Pacom lamented, referring to the boot camps for young delinquents in Ontario and to the increasing presence of metal detectors, surveillance cameras and police in many schools. She asked, "Is this the kind of school we want for our young people?"

The second stereotype is to think of young people as victims. Type casting young people into this role reduces their reality to a series of problems: suicide, unemployment and dropping out of school. These are genuine problems of concern, but they do not define the reality of all young people. "Despite the unravelled tapestry, this is a young generation that, more than any other, demonstrates incredible creativity and continues—despite this world of disillusionment, lost reference points and, often, the absence of hope—to hold on, to become involved and to be committed."

Finally, the third stereotype involves thinking of young people as consumers. "Young people are bombarded with research conducted by major marketing firms so that companies can sell anything to them, turn them not into autonomous citizens but into manipulated and exploited consumers," said Pacom. But, she adds, one must admit that it is these companies that have understood young people best and captivated their souls. Why doesn't society make as strong an effort to understand them? "There is misinterpretation when it comes to young people," she concluded. "We don't understand them, we don't really know who they are."

By Eve Krakow

Question: *Shouldn't we be going through this same exercise with teachers? Because, in a way, the unravelling tapestry you spoke of is also the legacy that has been handed down to teachers.*

Diane Pacom: Yes, and, in fact, I'm already doing that. I sense the urgency and enthusiasm. But it's also up to you to pass this message on to others. We should be communicating at all levels: from daycare to university, both horizontally and vertically. Most importantly, we have to rekindle our optimism.

Q: *Are you hopeful?*

DP: I'll answer with the words of the German philosopher, Ernst Bloch, whose work greatly influenced me while I was doing my Ph.D. in political philosophy: "We have no ultimate assurance, we have only hope."

I'm still skeptical about the future, because some days I wake up and, when I see what's going on in the world, I think, "That's it. It's over. Our civilization is going to disappear like countless others before us." But other days I see tremendous creativity among young people. That's where we have to look to find hope.

We need to be wary of overly simplified generalizations about young people, because this generation is in a continuous state of flux. Approach your classes each time as if it were your first time in the classroom. I've been doing this for 25 years, and it still works.

Q: *You spoke of narcissism. It made me realize that our concept of teaching is tied to narcissism. The reform offers hope: by refocussing our teaching on the student, for whose benefit we are working, we can leave behind this narcissism in which more importance is given to the teacher than the learner.*

DP: We shouldn't forget that our students are citizens. This is one of the major things people achieved in the 1960s and 1970s: they gave young people a potential citizenship. We have to use this as our starting point. That's what marketing companies do: they treat young people as citizens. They say, "You have a right to music, you have a right to fashion." These are aspects of young people that they have mastered.

You're completely right about the question of narcissism: we've been much more focused on the teacher than on the student. There's no way to get around it: both the teacher and the student are important. It's a symbiotic relationship; you can't have one without the other. My mother used to say, "There are no bad teachers, only bad students." Now, after 25 years of teaching, I say: "There are only good teacher-student relationships."

Q: *Our young people need mentors. Have you thought about what kind of model Québec schools should develop to provide this mentoring?*

DP: I haven't thought of a model, but I think that every adult who is in a pedagogical, parental or friendly relationship with a young person should always be aware of his or her role in the life of that young person.

We tend not to realize that young people are impressionable. Despite the fact that we may not consider ourselves adults, they see us as adults. Young people today aren't experiencing the generation gap in the same way as the previous generation. The differences between the generations aren't as pronounced. Because of the kind of familiarity we have with them—the fact that I come into class and tell my students, "Call me Diane"—sometimes we seem to forget our real relationship to them. For us, youth equals truth—so we're as vulnerable with respect to them as they are to us.

Whenever we talk to a young person, we should try to be aware of the consequences of our actions. As teachers, educators, principals or education consultants, we need to get away from the bureaucratic attitude of seeing students as clients or numbers. You have to realize that what you have just said to this or that young person may affect them to such a point that they will decide either to give life their all or to embark on a path of destruction. That's what I mean by mentoring. It's not so much a program as an attitude to be cultivated.

By Eve Krakow

Denis Watters set the tone by examining the meaning of these two educational aims. "How do we picture a student who structures his or her identity?" he asked. "As a carpenter who organizes materials? As a potter who shapes and models clay? As a musician who composes or interprets a piece of music?" According to Watters, it is the student who "draws on his talents, discovering his strengths and driving back his limits."

What about the student who constructs his or her world-view? Is he or she "a philosopher or theologian who reflects on the great questions of existence? A physicist who seeks to understand the workings of the universe? A historian who takes a critical look at major international events?" Watters believes it is the student who "examines the world around him to better understand it, who asks questions and questions himself, and who becomes aware of his power to act and to change the world."

Denis Watters, Personal Development

"Through the activities proposed," said Watters, "students learn how to relate to themselves and to the outside world." Through team sports, for example, they learn to recognize their talents, interests and limits, and how to make a place for themselves within a group. Outdoor sports bring them into contact with the environment, leading them to reflect on the consequences of their actions and those of others.

In being exposed to the achievements of individuals committed to justice and equality, students are encouraged to make concrete gestures in their own communities. "By studying stories from the religious traditions, students learn that the people who came before us, who did not have our scientific knowledge on the origins of the universe, asked the same questions as we do today. In learning about the ways of others, students become aware that differences can be a source of enrichment rather than division."

Carole Bellavance, Arts Education

"Art is a special way of learning about the world," said Bellavance. "It's also a powerful and universal means of communication." Art enables students to better understand human beings and the world, in that it provides access to the history, cultural heritage and experiences of peoples. In interpreting and appreciating a variety of works, "students benefit from this fantastic window to examine new and sometimes surprising cultural realities."

Art offers an extraordinary opportunity for young people to construct their identities because "they are the raw material for the subject matter. They must draw on their own bodies, voices, imaginations and cultures." Creating a work also means connecting with oneself, "not just drawing on one's strengths and talents, but also confronting one's fears and limits." In appreciating works, students learn to share their reactions with others. Finally, through collective works, plays or choreographies, students learn to explore their relationship to the group.

Marie-Noëlle Soumeillant, Social Sciences

"The general objective of the social sciences is to enable students to act as responsible citizens through an informed understanding of social realities," noted Soumeillant. "Students who truly attain this objective develop their identity and construct their world-view."

Soumeillant gave the example of a student confronted with the war in Iraq. "To understand this reality, students must find reference points. Where is the conflict taking place? What countries are involved? Who are the main players? What are their roles? How did they get there?" Gradually, students "take ownership" of this social reality. They become able to identify the groups and interests involved, and to understand the complexity of the situation. They identify the political, social, economic and territorial issues at stake. Students learn to ask questions, and to recognize and question the different sources of information at hand. "They become able to take a stand and to carry out their role as responsible citizens."

Mirhan Djiknavoriam, Mathematics, Science and Technology

This subject area is "an unequalled school for the development of the intellect, combining intuition with logic," stated Djiknavoriam.

"The modelling of situations and the search for solutions to problems provide opportunities for organizing thought logically. In particular, they call upon our creativity, critical thinking, and argumentation based on fact and decision-making with relation to data," Djiknavoriam continued. "Rigour, autonomy and cooperation are the foundations of this process. Through problem-solving, students construct their own ways of seeing and doing. This subject area aims to spark students' interest in carrying out research, to pique their curiosity and to encourage them to continually seek more information."

Lise Ouellet, Languages

Ouellet asked participants to draw a square with the words "language," "culture," "identity" and "world-view" in each corner respectively, and the word "student" in the centre. She then discussed the relationships between these elements.

"The student's language is at the heart of his or her identity. It enables the student to participate in a culture and provides social belonging," Ouellet began. "By learning different languages, students learn about their own culture and gain access to others'." Studying the historical and cultural role of language in the collective identity also helps students understand why the mastery of language is important.

As students develop reference points in literature, poetry, music and theatre, "they discover that cultural references such as *Little Red Riding Hood* are not exclusive to the English- or French-speaking communities, but are part of our universal cultural heritage." Language is also a tool for understanding texts in order to "read" the world, thereby enriching the students' world-view and developing their critical thinking abilities.

Marthe Van Neste, Broad Areas of Learning

The broad areas of learning play "an integrative role in helping students construct their personal identity and world-view," said Van Neste. "Young people come to school with some basic questions: What do I see and understand of the world around me? Where do I fit in? Being who I am, what can I do in this world? These are embodied in the five broad areas of learning."

These five areas lead us to examine universal concepts: personal integrity (hea[illegible] well-being), insight with respect to [illegible] events (media literacy), interdependence (citize[illegible]hip and community life), having a life project as one's driving force (personal and career planning) and the importance of balance (environmental awareness and consumer rights and responsibilities). "The more the school is able to weave the broad areas of learning into the structured learning of the subject areas, the more the student's personal identity and world-view will expand," she concluded.

By David Fuchs

How People Learn

"How do I act, as a teacher?" Aitken began. "How do I incorporate inquiry into what I'm doing in the classroom? Do I just go and 'dip into' the broad areas of learning when I'm trying to create a project? These are some of the questions that teachers are asking. But they are not asking questions about what a child's world-view is," she said.

"Your students are coming to you with already existing world-views that are always in flux and under construction. Whatever our experiences, whether positive or negative, our world-view is being shaped. We just want it to be a little more positive and effective for students," Aitken explained. She sees three levels to achieving this objective: teachers first need to address learning through the broad areas of learning because these areas embody students' concerns about the context in which they live. Then there are the cross-curricular competencies, which are the actual tools teachers use to help students build those world-views. "The whole process of how you engage critically, creatively and with other people is developed through these competencies. Finally, the subject areas are the material we are working with, the fabric for the construction of the world-view," said Aitken. "This process is not only about constructing projects, it is about these individual children whose lives are being changed by the interaction you are having with them."

"What is your own world-view? Do you know who and what has shaped it? Teachers need to be engaged in discussion about what a world-view is and how people learn and construct knowledge. These are issues we haven't given enough attention to," said Aitken. To further illustrate her point, she shared a saying by Paulo Freire, a renowned educator who has had an impact on her own world-view. "Knowledge emerges only through invention and reinvention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world and with each other."

"If you approach the QEP with a foundation of how people learn, think about the school's goals and then engage teachers in discussion about these points, then it's easier to understand why we need to teach an inquiry-based approach," said Aitken.

Aitken suggested the following Web site for participants to further their understanding of how people learn: <www.nap.edu/html/howpeople2/ch2.html>.

"Culture is the best starting point for embarking on a discovery of oneself, others and the world." Such are the inspiring words of the incomparable Mademoiselle Charlotte. There is no doubt that her creator, novelist Dominique Demers, and scientist Patrick Beaudin adhere to this maxim. It is therefore with enthusiasm that they welcome the education community's plan to shine a new light on culture in schools. The two speakers shared their views on the subject.

By Pascale Sauvé
(Translation)

et one question remains: how can this integration be achieved? "We can start by giving equal importance to the culture of the humanities and to scientific culture by creating links between the two," proposed Beaudin. "Let's infuse history into the teaching of science. Let's explore resources found in literature, poetry and the arts."

The profusion of knowledge

For Beaudin, there is no doubt that we live in an extraordinary era. "Thanks to information and communications technologies, there is a profusion of knowledge that crosses the boundaries of all cultures. Our reality is constantly changing, characterized by the complexity of the situations, questions and challenges to be met. On all continents, modernity is being questioned and scientific knowledge called upon to respond to new social demands that require us to construct knowledge in a way that adheres to a different kind of ethics: those of human dignity."

In this respect, the scientific and education fields have several points in common. Both are re-examining their missions, methods and responsibilities. Researchers, like teachers, find themselves confronted with the incessant growth of knowledge, which makes the organization and transfer of knowledge increasingly difficult. Teachers, like researchers, must reshape their practices to ensure an evolution of the act of learning.

On both sides, the challenge is the same: to invent new models to regenerate the creation and transfer of knowledge. "Culture can serve as a springboard to the pool of knowledge, for all subjects," said Beaudin. "However, before jumping off this springboard, it is important to make sure that there is water in the pool by clearly specifying the relationship between culture, the educational project of one's school and the programs of study." To fill this pool, he continued, one has to recognize three priority areas associated with the conditions for success of the educational aims in all countries: the culture of languages, the culture of the humanities and the culture of science. The mastery of language and languages should account for half the volume of this pool: "Without them, there is no formal thought," he explained, "and therefore, no science."

The science of reading

It is with this in mind that the SPST has developed projects focusing on reading, such as *Les Fables de La Fontaine : un puits de science* (La Fontaine's fables: A wellspring of science) and *Un musée à imaginer : le musée du Trou noir* (A museum for the imagination: The black hole). These initiatives aim to provide elementary school teachers with models for using documentation in science activities and leading cultural activities.

Because reading and science go hand in hand, no human being can possess all knowledge. Who is able to answer, in one breath, questions on volcanoes, on genetically modified organisms and on the stars? "Scientific researchers cannot do their work if they don't have the documentation," Beaudin confided. "The same is true of teachers. If they can't draw on documentation to update their knowledge, they will have a hard time working with students and achieving the objectives of the reform."

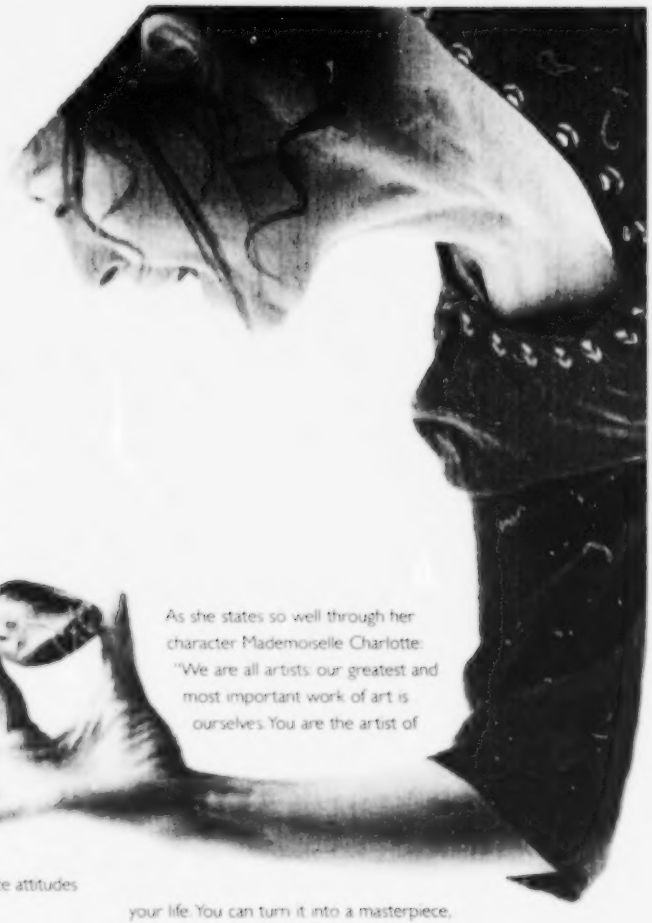
Therefore, to revitalize the teaching of the sciences, he argues, the education world needs to prepare for the arrival of a new generation of documentalist teachers. In this vein, Beaudin called for a reinvestment in school libraries, in particular through the acquisition of books related to the school's educational project and pedagogy, and for the creation of a science media centre for teachers.

What Beaudin hopes to achieve is a successful rebirth of scientific culture, for all students. Already, by stating that science is a vehicle for culture, the education community has taken a big step toward improving its teaching. ■

For further information, visit the Web site of the Société pour la promotion de la science et de la technologie at <www.spst.org>.

By Pascale Sauvé
(Translation)

Participants began their day of reflection on the cultural dimension with a bit of music, courtesy of David Fuchs, journalist for Schoolscapes *and* Virage. *He performed works on guitar by Bach, Tarrega and Villa-Lobos, against a backdrop of images evoking the world of these musicians.*



"I'm convinced that this is the most beautiful project in the world, but that the conditions for success are perhaps not all there yet," said Demers, speaking of education. "We're missing what I call *spling*: a combination of emotion, magic, sunshine and experience."

It is now clear that educators have an important role to play in this regard: they must be "carriers of culture." In order for the carrier's role to take shape and have life, said the author, "a person must first be convinced of the importance of this role and be able to give a clear, simple and passionate answer to the following question: *Why should we incorporate culture into school on an everyday basis?*"

For Demers, the answer is obvious: because art and culture are rich sources of *spling*! In other words, art and culture serve as invaluable glasses for looking at the world differently, for reminding ourselves that anything is possible and that we can reinvent the world. Art and culture offer freedom, and this freedom confers tremendous power in a world of so many constraints. Art and culture are fabulous guarantees of happiness and a wonderful gateway to oneself and others. "These answers are exceptionally meaningful to children and adolescents, who have a hard time dealing with life's constraints and who are hungry for power and freedom."

Integration

The challenge is to integrate art and culture into the classroom, the school and young people's lives. According to Demers, this can be achieved by adopting the appropriate attitudes and developing certain methods.

At the heart of the process, there has to be a flame of passion, which we need to light and sustain. "To nourish young people, teachers must be nourished," the author said. "To be stimulating, teachers need to be stimulated. To be 'carriers of culture,' teachers need to discover and experience culture themselves." To continually feed this flame, it is important to equip teachers with the proper tools, to focus on professional development and to encourage the creation of "packs": like cyclists who work as a team, people need to take turns, combining their efforts and strength to make the ride easier.

Demers believes that the project's success depends on attitudes, openness, respect, exposure to cultural diversity, trust and partnerships with young people. In other words, it's about taking into account the individuality of each person, with his or her strengths and weaknesses, without judging them; it's about using various tools and means to help students fulfil their potential and travel as far as possible along their path—"and not the path that we have invented for them," she specified. It's about believing that anything is possible in a world of artists and champions.

As she states so well through her character Mademoiselle Charlotte: "We are all artists: our greatest and most important work of art is ourselves. You are the artist of your life. You can turn it into a masterpiece, reinvent it as you like, put in all the *spling* you want, add colour, movement, flavour, music, shadow or light. Anything is possible." ◀

Mademoiselle Charlotte:
It's missing a bit of spling.

Léonie: *What's* spling?

Mademoiselle Charlotte:
Anything that inspires us, drives us, elevates us, and makes us feel even more wonderful and alive.

Léonie: *Where can you get it?*

Mademoiselle Charlotte:
You can make it, share it, trade it… and once you have it, you realize getting it wasn't so hard after all.

Excerpt from
L'Incomparable Mademoiselle C
(Translation)

The development of competencies in secondary school

For Sophie Grieco and Chantal Laporte of the École Georges-Vanier, the reform is a jungle. Is this a good or a bad thing? Should we consider this exotic forest untamable and implacable, or a promise of adventure? Grieco and Laporte tend to see the good side of this tropical realm, although they do admit that you need to be well prepared to enter into such territory. They speak from experience, having in the past two years led three Secondary V classes through paths as luxuriant as they were demanding. Grieco and Laporte proposed that their students develop the four competencies of the French (language of instruction) program for elementary school, while continuing to acquire the knowledge specified in the secondary program of 1995.

By Jean François Giguère
(Translation)

The key is in the

At first, the project of integrating competency-based learning was initiated by Grieco, who was a teacher at the time, and who, today, is an education consultant. The change was born of her dissatisfaction. She was aware of "the limits of her pedagogical actions on the genuine learning of her students" and noted that some of them were indifferent to the thought of failing the French course. And this was not because she failed to plan her course or do evaluation, or because she did not adhere to the program. On the contrary! She taught her students the appropriate textual and linguistic concepts, supervised the required personal work and made sure to prepare both formative and summative examinations as necessary. Evaluation held an important place in her planning: more than half of the time in fact. Students were given plenty of reading material and writing situations.

The transition to competency-based learning, started by Grieco and continued by Laporte when the latter became an education consultant, was marked by a curious paradox. Students performed more complex tasks and were more motivated. Interestingly, the additional work did not slow them down. Their interest in the tasks to perform outweighed the increased workload. For example, to develop their competency to read and write varied texts, students read four books from the twenty on the suggested reading list for the year and made in-depth analyses in order to give their book presentations a specific point of view and an original treatment. With the help of their classmates, they also wrote a text of considerable length—either a collection of short stories, a fairy tale or series of tales, a novel or a play. The process that led from the initial creative spark to the finished product was well defined by the teacher. In addition, reading activities provided an opportunity to develop the competency *to appreciate literary works*.

In a context where complex works figured more prominently, lecture-style teaching was often done in group sessions, i.e. it was adapted to production needs. For instance, an optional session on poetry was offered to students as they began preparing their poetry recital. With learning situations spread out over several weeks, the role of evaluation changed. It was built more seamlessly into the learning. This is not to say that it does not remain a major challenge. But it is achievable. And Laporte showed participants at her workshop that the challenge is within their reach. Her electronic slide show did not only contain pictures of a roaring lioness and nasty crocodile to support her jungle theme; it also contained the evaluation checklists she uses as well as students' self-evaluations. A quick overview showed that academic requirements had not been scaled down.

eagerness to try!

In Grieco and Laporte's slide show, two slides evoked rather well the path they have travelled so far. The first contained a school year plan from before the adoption of competency-based learning; the second described the renewed approach. If you add to this paradigm shift the renewed evaluation methods and the implementation of cooperative learning in the development of competencies, then the scope of change is impressive. Both educators agree, however, that all is not yet perfectly in place. That is not surprising. Time and experience will enable them to make improvements. But the basics are sound: students' motivation has increased and their work reflects complex learnings that they will be able to use throughout their lives and in their work and leisure activities.

What is the next step then? They want to carry out more interdisciplinary projects, incorporate the broad areas of learning more explicitly, redesign the report card and set up closer collaboration with parents. The next step is perhaps to give students feedback on their cross-curricular competencies. Grieco and Laporte have determined those that will be developed by their students in each of their productions. But significant steps must still be made before regulation—which gives students information on the progress of these competencies—is organized. However, these educators will no doubt achieve this goal since they have already adjusted their evaluation and appropriately integrated one of the broad areas of learning. In their annual plan, students engage in the competency *to use language to communicate and learn* through the Personal and Career Planning broad area of learning. Students must give an oral presentation on an occupation after having visited a person at their workplace.

Following a workshop like the one given by Grieco and Laporte on February 25, there are generally three types of reactions that show our appreciation. The first is gratitude, because we can't help being thankful for the courage and humility they needed to present the daily life in their classroom, and because we are indebted to both individuals for having helped us find solutions. Second, we check to make sure we did not forget the documents that give a detailed description of how they organized their school year. This is a great source of inspiration. Each participant can find in such material an impetus to create, in his or her own way, a context that favours the development of competencies. But the strongest and most enduring reaction following their presentation can be summed up in a few words: "Yes, reform in secondary school is possible!" If emotion is the driving force, then they have given us the key: the eagerness to try.

INTEGRATING INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGIES

Christiane Dufour, QESN-RÉCIT, Development and co-ordination
(Translation)

Spring Acid Rain Watch

Spring Acid Rain Watch is a collaborative project that involves classes from many regions of the province and the world who communicate using simple Internet technology. Together, the classes form a team of researchers who share their processes, data and analysis. Interested teachers can register and their classes can become part of this team.[1]

It is one of several "Learn-by-Doing" projects offered by the Québec English Schools Network RÉCIT (QESN-RÉCIT). In these projects, an experienced project co-ordinator acts as a guide and offers assistance to registered teachers. "Learn-by-Doing" projects model one form of integrating communications technology and of learning projects in step with the Québec Education Program (QEP). Spring Acid Rain Watch, a science-based project, is a good example of this approach. The complete collection of "Learn-by-Doing" projects deals with most of the major subject areas.[2]

Spring Acid Rain Watch is the brainchild of Bob Colvil, a grade 5-6 teacher at Knowlton Academy. The project began as a local classroom project, but found its true scope when the Internet opened the doors of communication with other classes around the world. It was originally developed several years before the implementation of the current QEP but, from the beginning, it addressed a number of the preoccupations of the QEP:

- The project is rooted in a constructivist approach that engages the students actively in their learning.
- Acquisition of essential knowledge of the science curriculum is linked to the development of cross-curricular competencies. Students are not simply requested to learn or acquire information. They are given access to information which they must **use** to reason and to propose an explanation to a scientific problem.
- Students are challenged to re-examine their personal representations as they construct their understanding of the problem.
- Students embark on a real scientific inquiry. They try to answer a question through data gathering and find that there are no perfectly clear right answers.
- Language, science and cross-curricular competencies all work together as the students use language to get things done, to solve problems, to imagine possibilities, to locate and use information, to communicate with peers in class and abroad, etc.
- The project suggests a process and teaching practices in step with the QEP, while remaining flexible and feasible in a variety of learning and teaching contexts.

In the classroom, the focus is on scientific inquiry and co-operative learning while students are challenged to understand a real-life problem and to answer a real-life question. The problem is embedded in the question: "Among the many causes of acid rain, to what extent is human industrial activity an important or significant factor?"

The backbone of the project consists of five (5) steps:

1- Meet your partners
The class contacts the other participating classes, letting them know that they will be working as a team with them.

2- What we already know
Students explore what they already know, personally and as a group. In doing this, they activate their current constructs and expose the myths that they hold to be information. They communicate this current knowledge to the other classes. This becomes a starting point which launches the next step.

3- Research! Learn! Get ready!
A. Students must formulate an enlightened hypothesis but first need to develop a better understanding of the component parts of the problem-question: what is an acid and a base, how is rain formed and transported, what are the possible causes (natural or human) and effects of acid rain?

The Characteristics of the Project

- A "**telecollaboration**" done in partnership with distant classes through the use of Internet communications technology. Communication with these distant classes fits naturally in the project and offers real added value.
- **Project–and inquiry–based learning** revolving around an integrated task
- Content and approach **in step with the QEP**
- A natural context for implementing **co-operative learning** strategies in class
- Built-in **flexibility** allowing teachers to adjust how they manage the project to fit their specific situation (technology, time, students)
- Seamless integration of **technology** with a focus on the learning that happens in the classroom rather than on the use of computer technology itself
- **Authentic learning** situations that engage the students in a real-life problem that they can tackle

To achieve this, they engage in documentary research which lends itself to the implementation of co-operative learning strategies. (See "A Place for Co-operative Learning")

B. Students then formulate a hypothesis: *"In light of what we know about acid rain, we think that …because… "* Based on this hypothesis, they make predictions as to the level of acidity they expect to find in their region during the data-gathering phase of the project. These results are communicated to the partner classes.

C. They also learn the basic skills required for measuring acidity and for collecting precipitation samples.

4-The experiment: our data, our analysis

The class collects precipitation samples over a period of time to check the validity of their predictions and to test their hypothesis. This requires:

- building a precipitation (rain, snow, …) collection station
- collecting and recording data
- sending data to all participants
- analysing local data and that of others in light of the hypothesis
- sharing analysis with members of the team and other classes

5-So what? What we did with the understanding gained

Students decide what they could do with the understanding gained during this project. Planning and taking action plunges students into a real-life situation, where knowledge is gained for a purpose and where it must be used. This can be used to highlight the evolution of their understanding from the first brainstorm activity on. Moreover, each group documents and communicates to the others the steps they have chosen to implement.

A Place for Co-operative Learning

The project offers a ready-made WebQuest that teachers can implement in their class.[4,5]

It was designed with co-operative learning in mind, and task interdependency has been consciously built into it.

- Students work as members of a **primary team.** The mission of the primary team is to produce a newspaper article addressing a pre-defined number of issues on the question of acid rain. Each team member is responsible for completing part of the task, i.e. research and write-up on one issue.
- Each student is also part of a **secondary team** of experts on one issue. The mission of this group is to develop a thorough understanding of the issue, to come to a shared understanding that will be brought back and used by the primary group.
- When the primary group reconvenes, the various experts have all the elements required to complete the task. They must do more than just write their section of the article. They need to convey their understanding of each issue to the members of the team so that, together, they can agree on the introduction as well as the conclusion.

The benefits for teachers

All QESN-RÉCIT "Learn-by-Doing" Projects, including Spring Acid Rain Watch, involve teachers from diverse backgrounds and experience who participate in a common task. This is possible in part because an experienced educator co-ordinates and supports participants. When considering whether to register for one of these projects, teachers should keep the following in mind:

- "Learn-by-Doing" projects are for teachers who have little or no experience with integrating communications technology in their teaching practices.
- They are also for teachers who feel comfortable with technology but who are looking for a more natural integration or a better curricular fit.
- Teachers who are ready to try something new but wish to be accompanied along the way have often found that a "Learn-by-Doing" project is a good way to go.
- These projects offer students a helping hand so that they can take another step in the right direction.[1]

An Important Place for Technology

The QEP considers information and communications technologies (ICT) to be an absolute requirement. However, how to build it into a project in a meaningful way is not always self-evident.

In this project, ICT falls into place quite naturally.

1. Classes communicate with their partners to share their data, analysis, understanding and actions. Current knowledge and thinking are enriched at every step by the input from the other classes. Communication is the only way to get the essential data required to test the hypothesis. All this is done through a simple Web-based bulletin board, but could be done by e-mail also.
2. Current information on acid rain, its effect on the environment and on our health, emissions, governmental action, etc. —this type of information cannot easily be found in the average school library. Access to the Internet as a source of documentary information is a must.

Note: The Spring Acid Rain Watch Web site is the primary source of information, resources and suggestions for participating teachers, while support and guidance is given mainly through e-mail by the project co-ordinator. Thus the project itself models how the Internet is both a communication tool and a source of valuable information.

SPECIAL EDUCATION AND COMPLEMENTARY EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

By Hélène Payette
(Translation)

Supporting Students in Learning Difficulties

Students can experience learning difficulties at any time over the course of their studies. These difficulties, which are manifested in a variety of ways, are a central concern for the education community. They represent the true challenge for all school personnel.

During the 1990s, several studies and reports highlighted the problems faced by the education system: a large number of students with learning difficulties or special needs, an increase in the dropout rate and a great many illiterate adults. These findings led to the challenge that initiated the education reform. In 1997, the educational policy statement *Québec Schools on Course* provided a framework for the reform by emphasizing the importance of success for all students.

How can we support all students, including those experiencing learning difficulties, and guide them toward success?

Under the reform, work has been conducted to review the three components of the curriculum: the education program, evaluation of learning and certification of studies. Success is now based on an education that enables the development of various basic competencies. Evaluation focuses on helping students. As for certification, it must bear witness to the successful achievement of those basic competencies, which are considered essential in helping young people adapt to the society in which they live.

Learning difficulties are mostly apparent in the competencies used to read, to communicate both orally and in writing, and to use mathematics. These difficulties are often compounded by attention or memory deficits. It is for this reason that the development of competencies now aims to turn school learnings into tools that can be transferred and used in daily life.

Furthermore, observing learning progress has important effects on the way teachers interact with students. Observation must be done systematically in order to verify progress and adjust educational methods. This transformation cannot be the sole responsibility of teachers. It must be done in cooperation with the cycle team, which includes complementary educational services staff, who can contribute other types of expertise.

In conclusion, we would like to inform you that innovative projects in line with the reform and the new curriculum are being implemented in various school communities, and we hope to introduce you to some of these in the next issues of *Schoolscapes*. Feel free to contact us if you wish to share winning experiences from your school.

An overview of the situation in 2000-2001

At the time when the reform began in Elementary Cycle One, school board figures showed that approximately 11% of students needed the support of an individualized education plan. This data did not take into account the many students with handicaps who had learning-related difficulties.

Many of the students with learning difficulties repeated grades; at both the elementary and the secondary level, it was the first year that was most affected. Boys repeated in a greater proportion than did girls—almost twice as much.

Concerning resources: A paradox

In 1996, in a brief entitled L'intégration scolaire des élèves handicapés ou en difficulté (Integration of special-needs students), the Conseil supéneur de l'éducation made the following observation: "The Ministère de l'Éducation's statistics show that support resources to meet these particular needs, i.e. to support students in their schooling and teaching personnel in their practice, are stable or increasing, while the education community claims they are decreasing, or at least, not increasing in relation to needs."

The same comments are still being heard today. The Ministère, however, has implemented a whole series of measures after having established an action plan for the Policy on Special Education:

- Over $120 million was invested to reduce the number of students per group in Preschool and Elementary Cycle One.
- $36.5 million over a three-year period was allocated in order to increase the number of professional resources to provide teacher support and student assistance. The stated objective is to add 860 jobs, particularly in special education, psychological services, speech therapy and psychopedagogy.
- Funds were allocated to improve access to new information and communication technologies, including those for at-risk students, and to support research development.
- Regional support and professional services, particularly for students with learning difficulties, were set up in all regions of Québec.

By Lynn Travers

The Inclusive Education Service

The origins of the Inclusive Education Service (IES) can be traced back to 1993 when the Ministère de l'Éducation (MEQ) initiated the *Cadre d'organisation des services régionaux de soutien et d'expertise en adaptation scolaire*. At the regional level, there were to be support services for the integration of students with special needs into the regular school setting: one with a mandate for students with moderate to severe intellectual handicaps, and the other for students with behavioural difficulties. Considering the difficulties of using a regional service model in the English sector, three anglophone resource people (Alice Bender, Nick Barker and Hal Linton) were given a provincewide mandate. Working from the Montréal regional office, they travelled tirelessly and, it seems, ceaselessly throughout Québec, providing support and expertise to the multitude of boards in English sectors. This service was to be much appreciated by the boards and schools. This particular model of service, however, required that the resource people be "on the road" on an on-going basis—an option unsustainable over the long term. Recruiting individuals who were willing and able to do this work became increasingly difficult, if not impossible.

So it was back to the drawing board! The defining elements of the redesigned service model would have to be its capacity and its sustainability. However, it would still need to retain and share

many of the characteristics of the original service model, notably its purpose, provincewide scope and mandate. Its purpose, to offer support and expertise for organizing programs and for providing differentiated teaching to students with a range of special needs, plus the added challenge of providing a service over such a broad and diverse territory, called for a multi-axial model. Further, the service would have to do more than "feed the need"; it would have to develop the schools' capacity to become more inclusive in their practices. English schools do not always have access to a variety of community resources or the specialized knowledge base necessary for successful inclusion.

From around 1998 onward, and coincidental to this redesign process, there were intensive changes in the school system that would become defining elements in the shaping of the service. First, the system had undergone a significant shift with the implementation of linguistic boards. Now there were nine consolidated English boards requiring service, rather than 50 or more English sectors. Furthermore, the new MEQ policy on special education, *Adapting Our Schools to the Needs of All Students* (1999), strongly reaffirmed "the harmonious integration into a regular class or group of every student for whom an individual evaluation of abilities and needs shows that such integration would facilitate learning and social integration." In the meantime, the MEQ transferred responsibility for the *Cadre d'organisation des services régionaux de soutien et d'expertise en adaptation scolaire* to the school boards, which they were to manage jointly with the Services à la communauté anglophone (SCA). Increased MEQ funding followed, enabling the expansion and specialization of these services to include the autism spectrum, learning difficulties and, eventually, students with language difficulties.

A set of principles was developed:

- Resources offered through this service must be accessible to all English boards.
- The service model must be dynamic (i.e. responsive to the diverse needs of the English community).
- The service develops capacity for inclusion within the boards.
- The service promotes collaboration and sharing among boards, schools and other community agencies.
- The service sensitizes educators to the diverse needs of learners, and helps with the means for developing inclusive programs and practices.
- The service promotes optimal teaching practices in inclusive classrooms through he promotion of current information on learning theory and practice.

After much discussion and sharing of ideas, the Inclusive Education Service (IES) was born! From small beginnings—just one centre under the stewardship of Lynn Senecal—the IES was to grow over the next few years as boards were invited to make proposals to become centres of excellence. There now is a full complement of five centres housed within four different boards:

These centres all share a common philosophy, a vision that all children belong and can learn in the regular school and community. Inclusion is the foundation for pedagogical practices: the student is seen as a member of the regular class, with program adaptation and/or support within the classroom or resource setting.

Each centre develops its services according to this shared philosophy, these principles and the expressed needs of the boards through a four-part mandate, common to both the French and English sectors. The result is a rich variety of offerings providing opportunities for knowledge building and exchange. The following is an overview of some of the activities that are presently available:

Centre of Excellence for the Physically, Intellectually and Multi-Challenged
Coordinator: Elaine Baylis-Creary
Eastern Townships School Board
101, rue du Moulin, bureau 205
Magog (Québec) J1X 6H8

Centre of Excellence for Speech and Language Development
Coordinator: Carol Jazzar
English-Montreal School Board
6000, Fielding Avenue
Montréal (Québec) H3X 1T4

Centre of Excellence for Behaviour Management
Coordinator: Eva de Gosztonyi
Riverside School Board
299, boulevard Sir-Wilfrid-Laurier
Saint-Lambert (Québec) J4R 2V7

Centre of Excellence for Autism Spectrum Disorders
Coordinator: Karen Zey
Lester- B.-Pearson School Board
1925, avenue Brookdale
Dorval (Québec) H9P 2Y7

Learning Difficulties Resource Centre
Coordinator: Lynn Senecal
420, Lansdowne Street
Westmount (Québec) H3Y 2V2

Support to School Boards and Schools

- The Centres have developed or are about to launch their own Web sites, which can be accessed through the Insight Web site: <www.qesnrecit.qc.ca/insight/index.html>. For example, the site on Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) offers information on ASD, and gives conference updates and links to other sites. This site features a copy of their handbook, the current newsletter and a list of important print resources.
- The Centre of Excellence for Behaviour Management welcomes visitors to their demonstration programs. Visitors can meet with personnel working in the Centennial High School Student Support Centre, the itinerant behaviour specialists, and in-school behaviour technicians. This offers an opportunity to explore ways in which these programs can be adapted to your own school situation.
- The Centre of Excellence for Speech and Language Development has a resource information centre and a lending library of journals, books and assessment and therapy materials.
- Newsletters.
- Telephone and e-mail consultations with the school boards around challenging cases.
- The Centre for Behaviour Management is presently working on a blueprint for safe and caring schools.
- The Centre for the Physically, Intellectually and Multi-Challenged can provide schools with information on Downs Syndrome related to numeracy, literacy and programs suited to this population.

On-going Professional Development

- Each Centre of Excellence offers a range of workshops that include:
  - The Explosive Child
  - Strategies for Intervening with Bullies
  - Non-Violent Crisis Intervention
  - Inclusive Education Strategies for Students with ASD
  - ASD Intervention Workshops: Visual, Behavioural and Language Strategies, and Social Stories
  - Accommodating the Sensory Needs of Students with ASD
  - Language-Impaired Students in the Inclusive Classroom
  - How to Create a Summer Language Camp
  - Topics Relating to the Intellectually and Physically Handicapped

The Learning Difficulties Resource Centre (LDRC) has developed within-board networks whose teacher-members meet several times per year to develop expertise and to share strategies. This encourages continuity, the development of a deeper understanding of students with learning difficulties and the adoption of promising teaching/learning approaches. Topics explored this year include: the learning profiles of "students at risk," best practices in reading, writing and mathematics development, complementary literacy resources that support the inclusion of students with special needs, curriculum-based assessment, and developmental IEP frameworks.

Research and Development Activities

To support the inclusion of 'students at risk' in French immersion and bilingual programs, the LDRC is developing complementary literacy resources in French.

- Mathematics strategies and materials are being developed to support high school students with learning difficulties and ADHD.
- The effectiveness of various social skills, anti-violence, anti-bullying and character education programs is being studied through the Centre of Excellence for Behaviour Management.
- The development and implementation of a quantitative research project in the area of ASD is underway.

Contribution to the Development of Provincewide Expertise

Through the Direction de l'adaptation scolaire et des services complémentaires (DASSC), the centre coordinators have an opportunity to meet on a regular basis with their regionally based colleagues to share and contribute to the development of knowledge in each of their domains of expertise. Contributions have included hosting ASD conferences featuring renowned experts in the field and sitting on the steering committee for the recent colloquium on bullying hosted by the MEQ.

The Committee of Anglophone Special Education Responsables (CASER) serves as a touchstone to ensure that the needs of the boards and schools are being addressed. The centres present their upcoming activities and discuss topics and issues of common concern with CASER. Overall guidance is given by the Inclusive Education Service Management Committee (IESMC), which is well supported by the directors general of the English sector. The IES Centre coordinators meet at least three (3) times a year to exchange information and to collaborate on specific projects, such as joint presentations at seminars or conferences, and to make, when necessary, recommendations to the IESMC.

To find out more about building capacity in your school to promote inclusive education and best practices for students with special needs, please contact your board's complementary educational services representative.

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Workshop 1

QEP & ICT: Making the Connection Through Project-Based Learning

Innovative teaching and learning practices can come alive when information and communications technologies (ICT) find their place in project-based learning approaches. Students and teachers can use ICT to investigate, create, collaborate and communicate throughout the learning cycle. But where do you start? How do you plan rich projects that connect with powerful ideas? What do you have to consider? What can you do now, considering the current realities of your class, that will pave the way for the vision you have of the future?

Join us and delve into the Québec Education Program through the lens of the cross-curricular competency "To use information and communications technologies." Explore the ways in which ICT can become an integral part of the project process. Consider what needs to be put in place to manage a project in your class. See examples of real-world projects that incorporate authentic evaluation and discuss ways to bring project-oriented assessment into your class. And finally, bring all the pieces together as you set about seeding a project plan.

Workshop 2

Video Visions

Lights! Camera! Action!

Come and experience QESN-RÉCIT'S hands-on workshop.

Members of the dynamic QESN-RÉCIT team will accompany you as you explore the medium of digital video and computers.

They will show you how to hook students into your curriculum through student-created video. In this workshop, they will explore the potential of digital video production as a vehicle for expanding and enriching learning experiences in a student-centered socio-constructivist environment. They will sharpen your focus on curricular fit with various aspects of the QEP, including cross-curricular and subject-specific competencies, as applicable.

Together, you will create the short video, going from idea to media, from storyboard to virtual celluloid, and from the camera to the edited, finished film.

We wish you a wonderful summer full of sunshine.

SCHOOLSCAPES
WORKING TOGETHER TO INSTRUCT, SOCIALIZE AND PROVIDE QUALIFICATIONS

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